Ten Million Votes for Democracy

The Southern PATRIOT

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Judiciary Committee Delays Senate Consideration of Poll Tax Bill

A favorable report on Sept. 27 to the Senate Judiciary Committee by the McFarland Subcommittee considering H.R. 7, the bill to abolish the poll tax, was hailed by the National Committee to Abolish the Poll Tax.

"Senator McFarland is to be congratulated on this step to give the vote back to 10,000,000 American citizens now deprived of the franchise by the poll tax."

Delaying Tactics

However, the decision of the full Judiciary Committee on Sept. 27 to delay action until constitutionality arguments could be heard on October 25th was viewed by the National Committee as a last ditch attempt to stall action on the bill.

No Need for More Hearings

"Hearings were held for over 18 months in the last Congress and ample evidence of the constitutionality of the bill is, and has been, available to the Senate Judiciary Committee for a long time. There is no need for further hearings on the bill."

The National Committee urges all supporters of the bill to write to their Senators protesting against any further delay in reporting the bill.

"When success for our boys in battle is a matter of hours, it is most unfortunate to delay for a whole month a bill that will give ten million Americans the right to vote."

78TH CONGRESS
1st SESSION

H. R. 7

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

May 27 (legislative day, May 24), 1943

Read twice and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

AN ACT

Making unlawful the requirement for the payment of a poll tax as a prerequisite to voting in a primary or other election of national officers.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the requirement that a poll tax be paid as a prerequisite to voting or registering to vote at primaries or other elections for President, Vice President, electors for President or Vice President, or for Senator or Member of the House of Representatives, is not and shall not be deemed a qualification of voters or electors voting or registering to vote at primaries or other elections for said officers, within the meaning of the Constitution, but is and shall be deemed an interference with the manner of holding primaries and other elections for said national officers and a tax upon the right or privilege of voting for said national officers.

SEC. 2. It shall be unlawful for any State, municipality, or other government or governmental subdivision to prevent any person from voting or registering to vote in any primary or other election for President, Vice President, electors for President or Vice President, or for Senator or Member of the House of Representatives, on the ground that such person has not paid a poll tax, and any such requirement shall be invalid and void insofar as it purports to disqualify any person otherwise qualified to vote in such primary or other election. No State, municipality, or other government or governmental subdivision shall levy a poll tax or any other tax on the right or privilege of voting in such primary or other election, and any such tax shall be invalid and void insofar as it purports to disqualify any person otherwise qualified from voting at such primary or other election.

SEC. 3. It shall be unlawful for any State, municipality, or other government or governmental subdivision to interfere with the manner of selecting persons for national office by requiring the payment of a poll tax as a prerequisite for voting or registering to vote in any primary or other election for President, Vice President, electors for President or Vice President, or for Senator or Member of the House of Representatives and any such requirement shall be invalid and void.

SEC. 4. It shall be unlawful for any person, whether or not acting under the cover of authority of the laws of any State or subdivision thereof, to require the payment of a poll tax as a prerequisite for voting or registering to vote in any primary or other election for President, Vice President, electors for President or Vice President, or for Senator or Member of the House of Representatives.

Passed the House of Representatives May 25, 1943.

Attest: SOUTH TRIMBLE,

Clerk.

Definition of Poll Tax

The poll tax is a head tax levied on the right to vote. In 8 Southern states—Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia—such a poll tax is welded to the suffrage. In all or parts of certain Northern states—Maine, Massachusetts, Vermont, Rhode Island, etc.—a so-called poll tax exists but failure to pay it does not deprive one of the right to vote. Poll tax is used to describe such a head tax in the 8 Southern states where it is a prerequisite to the suffrage.

Effects of Poll Tax on Congress

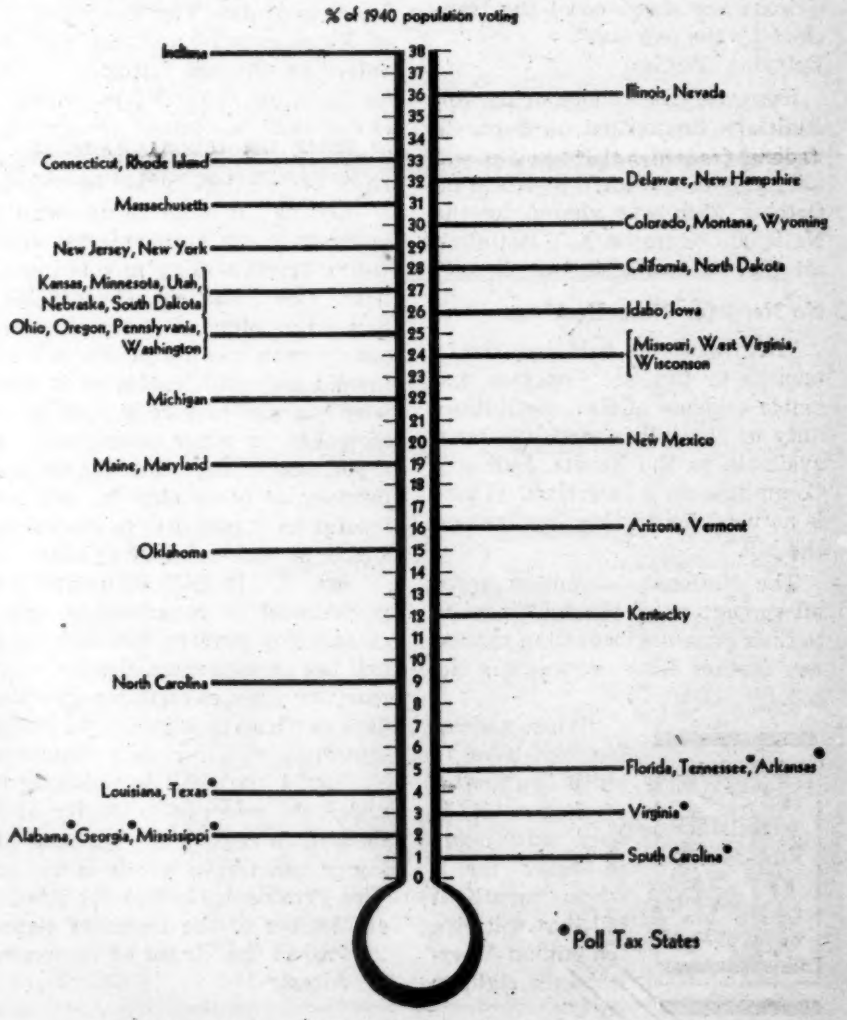
What does the poll tax do to Congress? It permits the seating of 50 "representatives" who were elected by a total of fewer voters than were cast in electing one Illinois Congressman. Low votes both in the elections and in the primaries foster machine control and corruption, strengthen the anachronistic one-party system, and stifle opposition. This results in "rotten districts" and in the same poll taxers being reelected year after year, decade after decade. Such long and secure tenure, through the operation in Congress of the principle of seniority, results in the poll-taxers controlling a major share of the principal committee positions. From this vantage point they sway an undue proportion of conference committees, develop great skill in parliamentary intrigue and maneuvering through their many years of experience, and consequently assume a dominating position in both House and Senate. They control the Rules Committee and the Speakership and through them the decision as to what legislation shall be considered. On these massive foundations they then create special "investigating committees" (Dies, Smith, Cox, etc.) that further add to their prestige and power. And all this is equally true of the Senate as of the House.

What the poll tax does to the 8 states themselves is to help keep them at the bottom of every health, housing, and educational standards list, and near the top of every list of disease, poverty and crime, because the people who would benefit by the correction of these conditions have no share in their government. Thus the poll tax is not an ancient relic; it is a modern tool of corrupt machine politics.

Three Southern states have already gotten rid of it. In the other eight Southern states, it is embedded in almost impossible-to-amend state constitutions. If it is to be removed, federal action is needed. Federal anti-poll tax bills have twice passed the House by large majorities.

The Thermometer of Democracy

% OF POPULATION, BY STATES, VOTING IN 1942 CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS



H. R. 7 Is Constitutional

Query 1. "Whether or not the drafters of the Constitution adopted, for the Federal election of the House of Representatives, the qualifications that might be laid down, whatever they were, by the legislatures of the several States."

The answer is "yes"; but such an affirmative reply leaves unresolved the crucial issues.

The basic issue is not whether the states have power to prescribe the qualifications for the federal suffrage. The basic question is whether the payment of a poll tax is a "qualification" for voting in the constitutional sense.

Qualification or Restriction

The Constitution does not authorize the states, under the guise of prescribing voting qualifications, to impose, contrary to the laws of Congress regulating federal elections, restrictions on the federal franchise that have no reasonable relation to a citizen's qualification to vote. If the payment of a poll tax has no rational relationship to the citizen's capacity to participate in the choice of public officials, it need not be treated by the Congress as a qualification within the meaning of the Constitution. A poll tax requirement imposes a *restriction* on the citizen's right to vote, but if it is not a *qualification* in the constitutional sense, then it is within the power of Congress in regulating Federal elections to override such a restriction on the right of a qualified citizen to vote.

In Edwards v. California, 314 U. S. 181, the Supreme Court unanimously held that a state could not deny entry to a citizen of the United States merely because he was indigent. Four of the Justices were of the opinion that, apart from the Commerce Clause, such discrimination was in violation of the rights of national citizenship as guaranteed both under the original Constitution and the privileges and immunities clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. One of them, Mr. Justice Jackson, in his concurring opinion, stated broadly (314 U. S. 181, 184-5): "We should say now, and in no uncertain terms that a man's mere property status, without more, cannot be used by a state to test, qualify, or limit his rights as a citizen of the United States. * * * The mere state of being without funds is a neutral fact—constitutionally an irrelevance, like race, creed or color."

But a poll tax requirement clearly has much less relationship to a citizen's capacity to perform the civic responsibility of voting than has a property test. The most shiftless of men may pay the tax because he found a five dollar bill upon the street. The worthiest citizen may prefer to feed his family. In truth it is difficult today to establish any real or substantial relationship between the poll tax requirement and the civic worth or capacity of the citizen.

National Citizenship

The Congress has affirmative power to regulate federal elections to protect the rights of citizens under the Constitution and to guard against fraud and corruption in the exercise of the federal franchise. The right of citizens to vote at Congressional elections, subject only to such limitations as may be legally imposed by the state or federal government in conformity with the Constitution, is a right secured by the Constitution, which the Congress is empowered to protect by appropriate legislation. (United States v. Classic, 313 U. S. 229, 314-315, 320.) Otherwise the rights of qualified voters could be set at naught. Assuming that certain restrictions on the suffrage which are not genuine qualifications in the constitutional sense may be imposed by the states in the absence of Congressional action, such restrictions do not escape the federal power to preserve the integrity of federal elections and to protect the rights of constitutionally qualified voters. In the exercise of its powers over federal elections, it is altogether fitting and proper for the Congress to prohibit state poll tax requirements if in the judgment of the Congress such requirements unduly restrict the rights of national citizenship and make for fraud and corruption in federal elections.

The power of the States to fix qualifications is limited by (1) the inherent meaning of the word "qualifications" as used in the Constitution, and (2) the power of Congress to protect the integrity of federal elections and the rights of constitutionally qualified voters.

If the poll tax is not a legitimate qualification for the federal suffrage in the constitutional sense, the Congress has the power to eliminate it and protect the rights of national citizenship. A constitutional amendment is not necessary to achieve a result within the existing power of the Congress.

Excerpts from a Legal Brief in Support of the Constitutionality of H. R. 7

Signed by 10 outstanding legal scholars, 6 of them connected with the poll tax states either by birth and education or by recent affiliation. These signers are George Gordon Battle, of North Carolina and Virginia, long the leading Southern member of the New York Bar; Walton Hamilton of Tennessee, now Professor of Constitutional Law in the Yale Law School; Myres McDougal of Mississippi, also of the Yale Law School; Leon Greene of Louisiana and Texas, now Dean of Northwestern University Law School; Robert K. Wettach and M. T. Hecke, Dean and ex-Dean of the Law School of the University of North Carolina; Lloyd K. Garrison, Dean of Wisconsin Law School; Charles Bunn of the Wisconsin Law School faculty; Walter Gellhorn of Columbia University Law School; and Edwin Borchard, specialist in Public Law and Professor in the Yale Law School.

Letters to The Patriot

Democracy and the Vote

To The Editor:

"Approximately 273,000 persons in Mississippi turned out to the election booths in our democratic procedure of selecting a new governor and other officials. A mere 273,000 persons voting in a state having 1,195,079 legal citizens of voting age according to the United States Census of 1940! This means that only twenty-three percent of the adult population in the state exercised its democratic right of voting in the state's most important election. Or, if one wishes to accept the traditions of Mississippi which bar the Negro from voting, then there are approximately 598,000 whites of voting age, of which only forty-six percent voted. Is this exercising the responsibilities of good citizenship inherent in democratic government?

"Mississippi is one of those states which require that the citizens pay to vote. Here the fee amounts to two dollars annually—not an exhorbitant fee, but a charge nevertheless. The persons moving into the state must reside here two years and pay the poll tax each year, although he will not be permitted to vote until two years' taxes have been paid. Four dollars is no small sum for a sharecropper with annual monetary income of possibly two or three hundred dollars, and, even if not a prohibitive sum, it is probably large enough to discourage many from voting. In some states the tax is cumulative: if a man lives in the state ten years without voting or paying the tax and then decides to vote in the coming election he will be required to pay the ten years' back taxes. In a short time the cumulative poll tax can become prohibitive for a large part of the population of such a state.

"I would not claim that abolishing the poll tax would solve all problems connected with government. I would not be so naive as to believe that 100 percent, or even ninety percent, of the citizens would vote if there were no tax. But it would be fairly safe to bet that, if there were no poll tax, over a period of ten years there would be a gradual increase in the percentage of the population voting. And it is essential, if we are to continue our democratic form of government, that a substantial proportion of the citizens actually take part in selecting the officials."

G. A. S.
Mississippi.

Our Honorable Opposition

To The Editor:

"In my opinion, this is about the best law we have in the United States, and if we could have a law like this in all the states of the Union we would be much better off. Personally, I could never see why anyone who values the privilege of voting would object to paying $2.00 for it. If he does not have sense enough to make an extra $2.00 a year with which to pay for the privilege of selecting his rulers, he certainly does not have sense enough to select wise rulers. In Mississippi this extra money goes to the public schools—certainly, a no more worthy cause.

"I cannot see, to save my life, why all this hue and cry against the poll tax law. It is not a racial question at all; it is simply a question of our Government being run by the most intelligent and not the less intelligent class. Those who are so thriftless and ignorant that they are willing to sell their votes are cut out from voting."

H. R. S.
Mississippi.

* * *

Un-Constitutional

To The Editor:

"While I am just as much opposed to the Poll Tax as you are, I cannot uphold the Poll Tax Bill. I cannot do this because I regard the Bill as a deliberate flouting of the Constitution of the United States. It is simply another step toward the destruction of the Republic set up by that Instrument, and the substitution of a National Socialistic, so-called democracy."

W. H. MacK.
Tennessee.

* * *

A Good Democratic Tax

"I want you to know that I am against the anti-poll tax bill and wish I could be a more formidable opponent. I see no oppression in levying a poll tax,—in fact I thing it is a good democratic tax because it is paid by rich and poor alike, is always a very small amount, and a pointed reminder that to vote is a duty,—that is, it is a duty to inform oneself so that one may vote intelligently,—as well as a right. Someone has to pay for the machinery of government, and that idea should be brought home to all,—when better than at the time of election of public servants?"

West Virginia.

The Poll Tax, Negroes, 'Better' Government

An editorial reprinted from the NASHVILLE TENNESSEAN, September 13, 1943.

In a long and considerate discussion of the right to vote this newspaper purposely has left the color question to one side, not because it is not important in the issue, but because it assumes undue importance—because it stirs up and is used to stir up the smoke of prejudice to obscure sense and fact alike.

The Negro citizen has an equal right to vote if for no other reason than that he is taxed equally, and that this nation owese its existence to the revolt of Americans against taxation withtout representation.

The poll tax is not a class tax, levied only against Negroes. Its disfranchisement is horizontal throughout the whole population. For every Negro kept from the polls by the tax, six white citizens are kept from the polls.

Fear of the Negro vote is a bugaboo fostered by sharp politicians to induce the overwhelmingly white population to put up with a tax device that robs them of their own first right of citizenship.

Nor is there any evidence, even in such machine ridden centers as Memphis and Chattanooga, that the Negro vote is less discriminating or more controlled than the vote of others.

* * *

The other bull that ought to be taken by the horns is the demand of quite superior people to know how removal of the vote tax will "bring about democracy" and how free access to the ballot box will result in "better government."

The first of these pharisaical posers is answered by the Supreme Court of Tennessee in a great decision handed down seven years ago:

> **". . . Universal exercise of the right of suffrage must be regarded as the ideal support of democratic institutions. . . The underlying princip'e of democracy (is that) which makes the will of an unfettered majority controlling. . . So it is, that restraint upon plenary participation . . . in a primary elections, as well as in a regular election, is destructive of the very basis of either system."**

The poll tax, which is a tax on voting, is per se a restraint upon voting, a fetter upon the citizen, and hence a destroyer of the democratic system. To bring back democracy you must, obviously, destroy its destroyer.

Should we then have "better government"? If by this is meant more efficient government, it does not necessarily follow. Those who conceive of efficiency alone as the be all and end all of good government are in the wrong country. The Hitlers and Mussolinis are the great ones for making the trains run on time, for making the wheels and the heels click together. The worshipers of efficiency-before-all are the push-overs for dictators wherever they wait.

But if we cherish as good the government that constantly is subject to the will of "an unfettered majority" —that is, a democratic government, given "ideal support," then we cannot too eagerly and decisive'y recapture to ourselves free exercise of that undefiled right of suffrage which is the sole and "very basis" of democracy.

The Southern PATRIOT

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Human Rights Take Priority

Even the enemies of poll tax repeal deplore its effect in disfranchising ten million Southern citizens.

But they continue to oppose federal repeal action on the ground that it violates the states' power to define qualifications for exercise of the franchise.

On page three we present the answer of eminent constitutional lawyers.

★ ★ ★

The Methodist Women of Tennessee have made the point that human rights take priority over any other rights, including states rights. We agree.

Constitutions, state or federal, exist for man; for his well being, not for his enslavement. Without the free ballot, democracy cannot survive.

Let the Senate without further delay pass H.R. 7.

Let the Supreme Court decide constitutionality.

★ ★ ★

What's in a Filibuster

When a minority of the Senate wishes to block the majority from acting on a measure, the minority continues to debate endlessly. A filibuster is minority rule.

The Filibuster Is an Enemy of Democracy

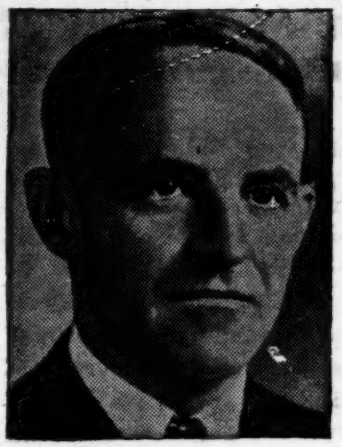
What a spectacle is presented by the Senate of the United States, with the greatest war in history in progress, with our men fighting and dying in every clime and country and continent; yet we who are the crusaders for democracy deny it to a large element of our people and to our own colleagues in the Congress of the United States.

The time to permit filibusters in America has passed. The filibuster is an enemy of democracy. If we give 6 or 10 Senators the power to thwart the functioning of this body, who can be sure what kind of a peace is possible; what kind of a post-war world? Give one-tenth of the body the power to muzzle nine-tenths, and democracy, as a functioning institution in the Senate, has been destroyed. So, Mr. President, while we say "charity begins at home," we had better let democracy begin at home, too.

SENATOR CLAUDE PEPPER

While we are crusading for and trying to preserve democracy in the world, buying it with the lives of our people, which means the breakdown of the tyrannical power of a minority, shall we exhibit to the world that a tyrannical minority may dominate the course of the United States Senate? Is that good faith to the men who die that democracy might live in the world?

SENATOR CLAUDE PEPPER *of Florida, in "A Plea for Democracy, the Anti-Poll Tax Bill," a speech before the Senate of the United States, November 21, 1942.**



DR. FRANK P. GRAHAM

Democracy Is the Vote

The struggle for political democracy has, in historic stages, centered in the battles for the right to vote as basic to the American system of local-State-Federal cooperative self-government. Denials of the right to vote on the grounds of property, race, and sex have given way before the advance of common men and women along the rough road toward democracy. Across this road the poll tax stands as a surviving barrier to the right to the participation in self government of Americans even now disinherited in the land of their fathers.

DR. FRANK P. GRAHAM, *President of the University of North Carolina and member of the War Labor Board. In an introduction to a symposium on the poll tax by* BARRY BINGHAM, GEORGE C. STONEY, JAMES C. MORRISON, H. CLARENCE NIXON, TARLETON COLLIER, *published in 1940 by the Southern Conference for Human Welfare and the American Council on Public Affairs.**

*Copies may be had without charge by writing to the Southern Conference for Human Welfare, Presbyterian Building, Nashville, Tennessee.

Percent of 1940 Potential Voters and of Population Voting in 1942 Election By Poll Tax States

State	Percent of 1940 Potential Voters Voting	Population Voting
Alabama	4	2
Arkansas	9	5
Georgia	4	2
Mississippi	4	2
South Carolina	2	1
Tennessee	9	5
Texas	8	4
Virginia	6	3
Average	6%	3%

Brief History of Disfranchisement in the South

Alabama entered the Union in 1819 with no tax requirement on voting, and all new states after that did the same. Virginia, New Jersey, Maryland and Tennessee all abolished the poll tax as a prerequisite to voting in the first half of the 1800's. Every Southern state except Georgia and North Carolina had abolished the tax requirement on voting by 1860

After a half century of free manhood suffrage, the poll tax was resurrected and reestablished in the 1890's and the 1900's deliberately and with clearly expressed intention of restricting the electorate by disfranchising the poor whites and the Negroes following the successes of the Populist Party in the South.

The "period of disfranchisement" was from 1889 to 1908. Tennessee, which had had full manhood suffrage since 1834, enacted a poll tax law in 1890. The effect in reducing the number of voters was immediate. The vote in Tennessee in 1892 was nearly 40,000 less than the vote four years earlier. Mississippi enacted its poll tax the same year as Tennessee and the reduction in the number of voters was even greater—from 117,000 in 1888 to 52,000 in 1892, a drop of 56 percent. South Carolina followed suit in 1895, Alabama in 1901, Virginia in 1901, Texas in 1903.

How Virginia Lost the Vote

Virginia had universal free manhood suffrage even before the Civil War. During Reconstruction a poll tax was enacted but it was repealed in 1882. For the next 20 years there were continuous attempts to restrict suffrage in Virginia. But until 1901 every attempt was defeated. In 1896 the general assembly passed a resolution to call a constitutional convention to change the suffrage laws, but a year later a vote of the people defeated the call by 83,000 to 38,000 votes.

In 1901 a convention was authorized after the Democratic Party had pledged that the new Constitution would be submitted to a "vote of the people for ratification or rejection."

Carter Glass

Near the beginning of the proceedings Carter Glass (now Senator) made a speech in which he said:

"The chief purpose of this convention is to amend the suffrage clause of the existing Constitution. It does not require much prescience to foretell that the alterations which we shall make will not apply to 'all persons and classes without distinction.' We were sent here to make distinctions. We expect to make distinctions. We will make distinctions."

Another delegate observed:

"There is a mass of vicious and incapable whites which must be debarred from the suffrage. . . The chief objection that I've heard to this system is that, along with many stupid and vicious whites, some worthy and good citizens will be disfranchised. This is doubtless true. . . "

When the Virginia Convention had worked out its new poll tax constitution it decided, by a vote of 47 to 38, to proclaim the new constitution without submitting it to a vote of the people—in direct violation of the law under which the convention was assembled. Thus the poll tax was imposed on Virginia.

The Result

In 1900 there were 266,000 votes cast in the Presidential election; in 1904 the number dropped to 136,000.

Why Federal Legislation Is Necessary

If the poll tax is to be abolished, it must be by Federal legislation. In 7 of the 8 poll tax states, the restriction on voting is embedded in the State constitutions of these states and there is little chance of the restriction on voting being removed in this way.

Experience of Tennessee

In Tennessee, where only an act of the legislature was thought to be necessary to abolish the poll tax, the invalidation on July 2, 1943, of such a repeal law by the State Supreme Court showed the insuperable difficulties of repeal through State action.

What are the chance of removing ing the restriction on voting by amending these State constitutions? Such an amendment must originate in and be passed by the State legislature, the members of which have been elected by the restricted poll-tax electorate. It must be passed in some of the poll tax states not by a simple majority but by two-thirds of the members of the legislatures, and in some states it must be passed by two successive sessions of the legislature. But even if these legislative obstacles are surmounted and a constitutional amendment is proposed, the amendment must then be submitted to the electorate. And what kind of electorate wi'l vote upon the proposed amendment? It will be a minority electorate, made up of those who have paid their poll taxes or have had them paid for them, those who for the most part represent the groups which benefit by minority rule. Will such an electorate vote to abolish the poll tax, when an enlarged electorate will reduce its power and privileges?

What Happened in Arkansas

We may recall what happened in Arkansas in 1938. The Arkansas Constitution is perhaps the easiest of all those of the poll tax states to amend, as an amending proposal requires only a simple majority of both Houses of the State legislature at a single session. A proposed amendment to abolish the poll tax received such a majority at the 1937 session of the legislature. But when the proposed amendment was voted on at the general election in Arkansas in 1938 it was defeated by the minority electorate by a vote of more than 2 to 1.

Ten Million Americans Disfranchised by the Poll Tax

The poll tax disfranchises 10,000,000 American citizens. The 1940 U. S. Census establishes the magnitude of this disfranchisement. Official figures show—

(a) 13.6 million people of voting age in the Southern poll tax states.
(b) 3 million, or 22%, paid the poll tax and voted in 1940.
(c) 10.6 million adult citizens did not pay their poll tax and could not vote.
(d) In 1942 the poll-tax vote fell to only 829,000, or 6%.
(e) In 1942 12.8 million adult citizens did not pay and could not vote.

Three-fifths of Citizens Can't Vote for President

In the 8 poll tax states, an average of only 22 percent of the potential voters (i.e., citizens 21 or over) actually voted in the 1940 Presidential election. In 8 comparable and representative non-poll-tax states, 82 percent of the potential voters voted. These states were Colorado, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, New Hampshire, South Dakota, Utah and West Virginia.

In West Virginia without a poll tax, 83 percent of the potential voters voted. Across the border in Virginia, with a poll tax, only 22 percent of the potential voters voted. In South Dakota 81 percent of the potential voters voted; in South Carolina only 10 per cent of the potential voters voted.

Only a Handful of People Vote For Poll Tax Congressmen

In 1942 the average vote cast in a poll tax Congressional election was 10,500 or 3 percent of the population. In the average non-poll tax district 7 times as many persons voted—77,800 persons, or 25 percent of the population. In terms of potential voters we find that in 8 representative non-poll tax states 51 percent of the citizens over 21 voted, in the 8 poll tax states only 6 percent.

Of the 79 poll tax Congressmen, 60 had no opposition in the 1942 election. In the entire states of Arkansas, Mississippi, and South Carolina there was not one single opposition vote.

Furthermore, 47 poll tax Congressmen or more than half, had no opposition in the primary. 41 poll taxers had no opposition (or less than 1,000 votes) either in the primary or in the election.

More votes were cast in Rhode Island (713,000 people) for 2 Republican representatives than were cast in that vast sweep of country from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mississippi River, embracing the entire states of South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi, plus 5 districts in Virginia, with a population of 11,500,000 and with 37 Representatives in Congress.

Number of Old-Timers Triples in 21 Years

In the last two decades the number of Congressmen and Senators from poll-tax states who have been in Congress 20 years or more has risen from 5 to 17, or more than tripled. This results, through seniority, in their holding more committee chairmanships, more positions of power in standing and conference committees, and having more power generally in the organization of the Senate and the House. Hence the evil effects of the poll tax become increasingly worse as the years go by.

"Cotton" Ed Smith

"Cotton" Ed Smith of South Carolina secured the votes of only 2% of his people to assure his re-election in 1938 for the 6th time. Smith is "dean of the Senate," having been there since 1909.

Two Weeks

It takes two weeks or 11 working days for the average Mississippian to earn enough to pay his own and his wife's poll tax, if they have been unable to pay the previous year (which may not have been an election year).

In terms of an average Californian's income, an Alabaman could run up a bill of $109 before being allowed to buy back the right to vote after 24 years.

The poorest state in the Union—Mississippi—has the highest poll tax. Many hundreds of thousands of farmers in the poll tax states are tenants who see little cash from one year's end to the next. How can they pay the equivalent of $10 to $30 to buy back the right to vote that a few previous bad harvests have deprived them of?

Effect of Repeal of Poll Tax in Increasing Voting

State	Year Poll Tax Repealed	Principal Parties* Vote by Years		Per Cent Increase
		Before Repeal	After Repeal	
		1920	1928	
North Carolina	1920	538	636	18
		1932	1940	
Louisiana	1934	268	372	36
		1936	1940	
Florida	1937	327	485	46

*Candidates polling less than 1,000 votes omitted.
**000 omitted; figures rounded to nearest 1,000.
Source: WORLD ALMANAC, 1943, pp. 389-413 incl.

To Filibuster In War Time Is Treasonable

There is no difference between a Senator obstructing passage of war legislation by a filibuster and a soldier laying down his arms in battle.

Every responsible Southern Senator must disassociate himself from another obstructionist filibuster against poll tax repeal.

Your Senators are waiting to hear from you, your friends, your kinfolk, your organization. With your active support, your Senators can become fighting heroes for democracy. Last year, of all Southern Senators, Claude Pepper, alone, fought to bring a free ballot to ten million disfranchised Southerners.

Today—ask your Senators to stand up for democracy. Ask them to denounce another irresponsible filibuster. Ask them to vote for cloture to defeat such a filibuster. Ask them to vote for H.R. 7, for poll tax repeal.

REMEMBER: Senators Bilbo (Miss.), Connally and O'Daniel (Texas), Hill (Ala.), Russell (Ga.), Maybank (S. C.), Stewart and McKellar (Tenn.), Reynolds (N. C.), Byrd (Va.) **particularly need to hear from you.**

Write today.

Sign the petition to the Senate which appears below. Tear off and mail—today.

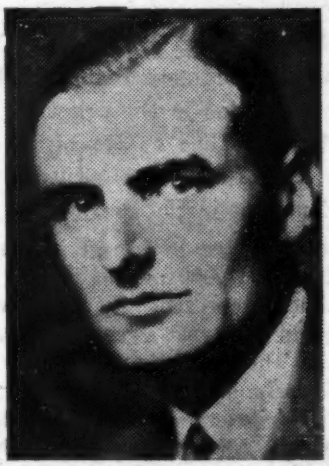
The Poll Tax and the War

By HERBERT AGAR

Formerly Editor, Louisville Courier-Journal, Louisville, Ky.*

I want to argue against the poll tax on the ground that it does grievous harm to my country. And I want to argue against it on an even better ground—that it does grievous harm to our world.

By "our world" I mean yours and mine. I am only referring to the obvious fact that we all belong to the same tortured human race and we all live on the same tortured globe.



HERBERT AGAR

If my country does not mean the doctrine of "all men", I do not know what it does mean. This is the New World idea, the essential American idea. We have always asserted it. On patriotic occasions we have always boasted it. But how many of us have lived up to it?

The result of a poll tax is to keep the poor from voting, or to keep the Negroes from voting, or both. If you keep the poor from voting, you make a joke of Lincoln.

If you do both these things at the same time, you may make a joke of the American idea.

If we debauch the American idea, we are selling out our soldiers and sailors as completely as if we went on a sit-down strike in the midst of a fight.

Our armed forces are fighting for the greatest cause in history—the cause of the whole human race. I think it is important for us Americans here at home to decide whether we believe in the human race. If we don't, let's join the Herrenvolk. If we do, let's prove it.

*Source: Testimony before the Sub-Committee on S-1280, The Poll Tax Repeal Bill, of the Senate Committee of the Judiciary, March 14, 1942.

An Appeal to the Senate of the United States

Since a free ballot is the cornerstone of genuine democracy, we urge the passage of H.R. 7 abolishing the poll tax as a condition for voting in Federal elections. Such action at this time would be a long step forward toward the free world for which we fight.

Please do not ☐ *do* ☐ *use my name in the above petition.*

I have written my Senators ☐

I enclose by contribution $_____

Name_____

Address_____

City_____

Organization and Title _____

Mail to: SOUTHERN CONFERENCE for HUMAN WELFARE
Presbyterian Building, Nashville, 3, Tennessee

If you have signed this petition, please pass it on to a friend.